

Montague Conservation Commission

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MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, September 11, 2013 – 6:30 pm

First Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall, One Avenue A, Turners Falls, MA

Commissioners Present: Mark Fairbrother, Donna Francis, Justin Fermann, Sean Werle and Addie Holland

Commissioners Absent: Deb Picking

Staff Present: Walter Ramsey- Agent

Guest: Joshua Epstein- potential Conservation Commission member

Mark Fairbrother called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM

Approval of Minutes July 11, 2013:

Motion made by Addie Holland to accept the July 11, 2013 minutes as amended. Seconded by Sean Werle. ***Motion passed unanimously.***

6:30 PUBLIC HEARING- NOI 2013-02- RECONSTRUCTION OF GREENFIELD RD BY TOWN OF MONTAGUE

In accordance with the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act, M.G.L. Ch. 131, Sec. 40, the Montague Conservation Commission held a public hearing to discuss a Notice of Intent #2013-02 filed by The Town of Montague for roadway and minor drainage improvements on a portion of Greenfield Road from the Canalside Rail Trail to the intersection with Hatchery Road (approx 2 miles). Portions of the work will occur within resource areas and buffer zones to resource areas.

Guests: Mark Elder (Project Manager for Greenman-Pederson, Inc- GPI), Bob DeFrancesco (Engineer for GPI), Lisa Adams (abutter), Kevin & Sandy Dowd (abutter), Jim Mussoni (abutter), Andy Rewa (abutter).

Justin Fermann recused himself because he is an abutter on the Greenfield Road project.

Walter R. introduced the project background:

- The project has been assigned a file number 229-233 by DEP, but no comments were included.
- The application had been filed with NHESP and they determined that the project would not result in a taking of endangered species.
- The Conservation Commission approved an Order of Conditions in 2000 that pertained to reconstruction of the entire length of Greenfield Road, including the south portion from the railroad bridge to the Bookmill. This OOC has expired as of October 2012.
- The current project includes the section of Greenfield Road from the bike path to Hatchery Road.
- GPI is the Town's engineering consultants for the project. MassDOT will fund and oversee the construction. A contractor has not been selected.
- The state plans to start construction in 2014.

Mark Elder gave an overview of NOI #2013-02 reconstruction of Greenfield Road:

- The roadway improvement proposals from the bike path to Randall Road are proposed to have 11 foot traffic lanes and 4 foot shoulders. The roadway improvements from Randal Road to Hatchery Road will have 10 foot traffic lanes and 4 foot shoulders.

- The shoulders will be made wider by approximately 2 to 3 feet while the traffic lanes will stay the same at these locations.
- Mass DOT is preparing the Army Corps permits and has had public hearings regarding the project.
- There will be a ¼ mile by 20 feet high retaining walls built along Greenfield Road with steel fencing on top.
- The major changes from the last NOI in 2000 are the intersection at Randall Road where the alignment will stay the same instead of impacting APR land.
- The project will replace 4 culverts and put in minor closed drainage systems which will allow the water to run off more efficiently during the winter months. Two of the culverts are for perennial streams. The proposal is to replace like-for-like.
- Work that is proposed in the riverfront area includes reconstruction of Greenfield Road, minor site grading, upgrading catch basins to make them deep sump, and maintaining the existing country drainage patterns that exist while installing minor closed drainage where it is necessary

Sean W. asked if Mass. Stream Crossing Standards have been met or considered for culvert replacement. They had not. Mark F. was concerned that the applicant had not clearly addressed the work to be performed in the resource areas. Members from the audience noted that the perennial streams are still active with trout.

Walter R addressed the impacts and big picture of the current project:

- There are three resources areas being impacted:
 - Bordering Vegetation Wetlands
 - Bank (no replication needed for a limited project)
 - Land Underwater (no replication needed for a limited project)
- 211 square feet of BVW is permanently being altered
- 46.7 square feet of bank (entire length under the road) is being altered (4 culverts)
- 87 square feet of land underwater is being impacted
- 650 square feet across the project is temporarily being impacted
- It is a limited replication project with a one to one replication of BVW. They have proposed expanding the existing wetland area on Mr. Mussoni's property to meet the requirements. This wetland replication area was previously approved in 2000 with the NOI, at a greater scale.
- The wetland replication area will include native wetland plants including: Wood flox, Elderberry, Cinnamon Fern, Twig Dogwood, Royal Fern, Cardinal Flowers, and Blueberry. They will be planted at grade of the wetlands.

Mark F suggested that GPI request a continuation of the public hearing and that they come prepared to answer questions from the Commission and the audience members regarding wetland impacts and how they will be addressed in a concise manner, with handouts for the board and 10 audience members. In addition photos would be a helpful tool as long as they are very clear and focus on what has changed. Mark F also wants to know if they have complied with stream crossing standards. There will be a site visit to see the culverts along with the distribution of materials.

Mark Elder requested a continuation of the public hearing for Greenfield Road to Thursday October 10, 2013 at 6:30PM located in the upstairs meeting room of the Town Hall.

Abutters present at the hearing will be mailed a notification of the hearing continuation from the Commission, at their request.

Conservation Agent Update:

- Discuss potential for establishing public access to Millers River in Millers Falls Assessors Map 31 Lots 3, 4, and 6 owned by Tower Erving LLC.

This area represents approximately 4 acres and would allow for pedestrian and canoe/kayak access as well. There would not be a need for a parking lot as there is space for a few cars and enough parking in town; a change from this would bring up liability issues for the town. Walter brought the possibility of establishing access to the river to the attention of Mt. Grace Land Trust and Fish and Game. An option is that the Conservation Commission could be the steward of the property; Erving potentially might use the upstream Usher Mill for boat access to the river. The Commission decided that they would like to pursue being a steward of this property and Walter R. will research potential liability issues.

- Options for mowing meadow at the Montague Center Wildlife Management Area – North Street.

Walter took a drive out to look at the bridge in the wildlife management area and stated that they did a wonderful job on the bridge reconstruction. However, since the project was completed this is leading to more foot traffic and calls to the office regarding the upkeep of the meadow. In the past (2007-2009), there was a grant that funded mowing and up keeping of the land. Currently there are no grant funds available and no volunteers to upkeep the meadow. In speaking with Fish and Game they are fine with the Conservation Committee up keeping the meadow; Mark F is willing to mow the meadow. Walter R. will write a letter and consider filing an RDA so that it will be ok for the property to be mowed by a volunteer.

- Topics not anticipated within 48 hour posting requirement

A request for a certificate of compliance for the Richardson Road beaver pond project came in on 9/10/2013 and there will be a site visit on September 26, 2013 in the afternoon, time TBA.

Motion made by Mark Fairbrother to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Addie Holland. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Meeting adjourned at approximately 7:49 PM

Approved by: _____ Date: _____